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Memorandum of Conversation

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DATE: October 27, 1958

SUBJECT: Views of West German Foreign Office Official on Reunification of Germany and Relations with the Eastern European Satellites

PARTICIPANTS: A German Embassy Political Officer
J. R. Ruchti, DRW

OCT 30 1958

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During a private conversation in early October with Herr Erich Straetling, he said that he had received the following views in a personal letter dated mid August from Dr. Fechter, senior desk officer for reunification in the West German Foreign Office. Herr Straetling requested that the information be closely held to protect both Dr. Fechter and himself.

- 1) Reunification is not an acute problem in Germany now. The views of the opposition parties (SPD and FDP) are milder than for some time. (No reasons were cited). The Landsmannschaften are strongly opposed to any discussion of reunification which would jeopardize the German claim to trans Oder-Neisse territories.
- 2) Fechter, himself, believes reunification is not possible now. The Russians will not agree to it unless Germany is neutralized or has a pro communist government.
- 3) The Russians prefer the status quo because of their great interest in the GDR—politically, strategically and economically. The GDR is too valuable to them to give up without receiving a price which the West cannot pay.
- 4) The recognition of the Eastern European satellites of the USSR is a key aspect of West German reunification policy. There is a division in the Foreign Office on the advisability of such a move. Foreign Minister von Brentano is undecided. Ambassador Duckwitz, Chief of the Eastern Division and Fechter's immediate superior, favors full diplomatic relations with the satellites. Fechter formerly favored this course after the Polish and Hungarian crises of

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1956, but he has revised his opinion. He believes relations would require a complete revision of German foreign policy precepts. His reasons for opposing relations are:

- a) The satellites are firmly tied to the USSR. The hopes of 1956 have not materialized.
- b) Relations with the satellites would damage the Federal Republic's basic policy of isolating the GDR regime. After West Germany recognized the satellites, 13 or 14 (unnamed) neutral countries would recognize the GDR.
- c) The experience with Yugoslavia has been a hard lesson. The Yugoslavs have not broken with Pankow inspite of severe communist ideological strains plus the severance of the Federal Republic's ties with Yugoslavia. If the Federal Republic were put in a similar position in the case of the UAR, for example, the East Germans would gain and the Federal Republic would exclude itself from a country of great interest to it.

5) Establishment of relations with the satellites on less than full diplomatic bases would be unrewarding. It is difficult for the members of an economic or trade mission to do good political work. In terms of prestige, the GDR diplomats would outrank the Federal Republic's trade group. This would be embarrassing in protocol.

6) In the case of Poland, there is the additional difficulty of the Oder-Neisse line. The Poles require German acceptance of the Oder-Neisse line. This is unacceptable for domestic German political reasons, including the strong views of the Landesmannschaften mentioned above.

Coordinated in draft: GPA - Mr. Williams